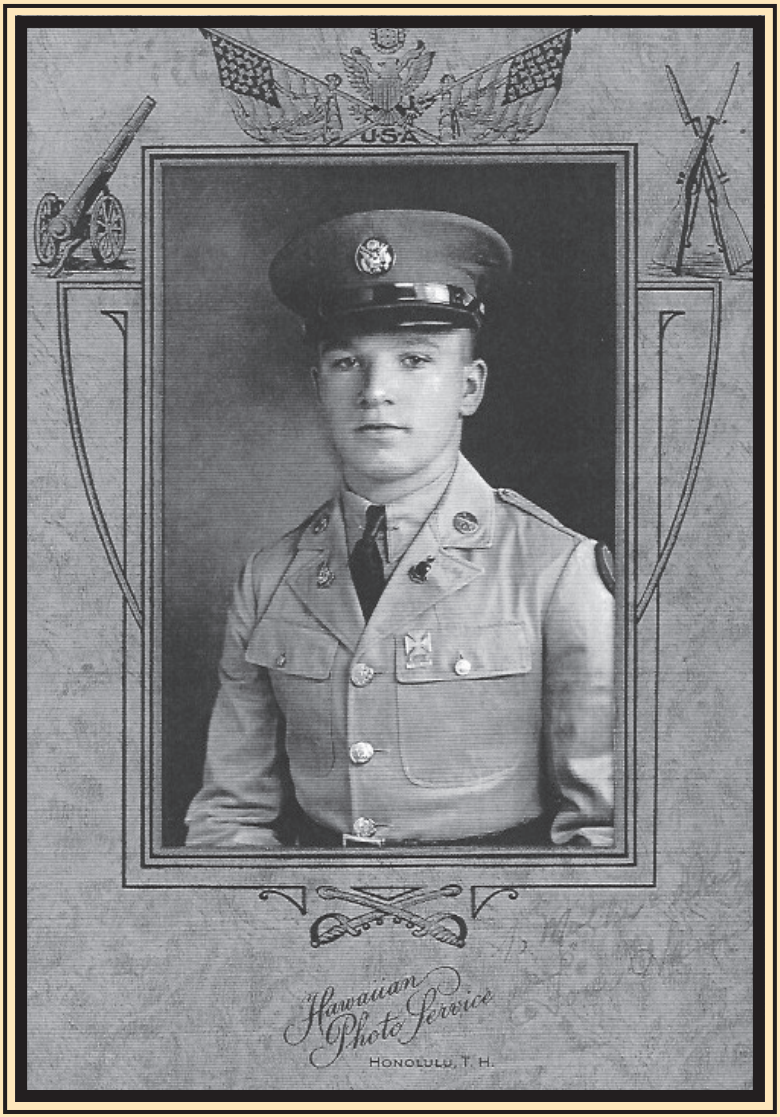
Clatsop County Historical Society Quarterly

CUMTUX



Vol. 41, No. 2—Spring 2021

CCHS IMAGE #98.036

Mrs. Lyle Mary Wheeler

In This Issue . . .

The theme for this issue of *Cumtux* might be how children combine work with play and, in time, learn the responsibilities of adults.

John Seeborg reminisced about growing up in the Depression years when spending money was earned only by initiative and invention. Pride and confidence were the results. Some funny memories were recorded in his autobiography brought by him to CCHS.

Few teachers at AHS attracted a following as Mrs. Lyle Mary Wheeler did. Mrs. Wheeler had a good sense of humor and was open to new ideas like the Torcher Hole Club proposed by Ralph Norgaard. In a recorded interview with Ralph, he described some of this popular club's crazy events. He also talked about his college football career, finding employment, and living in Deep River, Washington.

Also, in this issue is a story Barbara Gonzalez wrote for a Clatsop Community College class by Dr. Julie Brown in 2009 after interviewing people who grew up in a Deep River logging camp.

—The Editor

Clatsop County Historical Society
714 Exchange St.
P.O. Box 88
Astoria, Oregon 97103-0088
(503) 325-2203
info@astoriamuseums.org
www.astoriamuseums.org

Heritage Museum
16th and Exchange St., Astoria

Flavel House Museum
8th and Duane St., Astoria

Oregon Film Museum
7th and Duane St., Astoria

Uppertown Firefighters Museum
30th and Marine Drive, Astoria

Board of Directors

Luke Colvin, Astoria, OR
President

David Reid, Astoria, OR
Vice-President

Kent Easom, Coeur d'Alene, ID
Secretary

Kent Ivanoff, Astoria, OR
Treasurer

Jim Aalberg, Warrenton, OR
Andrew Bornstein, Bellingham, WA
Brett Estes, Astoria, OR
Craig Hoppes, Astoria, OR
Julie Kovatch, Astoria, OR
Patricia Roberts, Gearhart, OR
Randy Stemper, Astoria, OR
Dulcye Taylor, Astoria, OR

Staff

McAndrew Burns
Executive Director

Sam Rascoe
Director of Marketing

Liisa Penner
Archivist &* Cumtux *Editor

Chelsea Vaughn
Curator

Emily Rivera
Business Manager

Matt Powers
Facilities Manager

Sheila Nolan
Susan Swanby
Michael Wentworth
Cumtux Support

CUMTUX

Clatsop County Historical Society
Quarterly
Vol. 41, No. 2 — Spring 2021
Copyright © 2021 Clatsop County Historical Society
(ISSN 1083-9216)

Contents

1 **A Finn From Astoria**
by John E. Seeborg

28 **Interview with Ralph Norgaard**
from the Archives

35 **The Torcher Hole Gang**

39 **Custom Cars**
by Stanley Simson

43 **Memories for a Lifetime:**
By Barbara Gonzalez

Front Cover:
John Seeborg

CUMTUX: Chinook jargon:
"To know…to inform"

A Finn From Astoria

by John E. Seeborg
Introduction by Lawrence Seeborg

John Seeborg's early life was typical for a boy growing up in the 1920s and 1930s in Astoria. And he had plenty of company. He was one of thirteen children of Vic and Fanny Seeborg, who survived to adulthood. Their first child, Bill, was born in 1905, and their last daughter, Lora Jean, was born in 1931. John and his twin brother, Arvid, arrived in 1918, at the midpoint of this twenty-six-year period. The early life of the Seeborg family in Astoria was written by John's brother, Arnold, and was published in the Autumn 1984 issue of *Cumtux*. Later, a short history of each of Vic and Fanny's children was presented in this publication's Spring and Summer 2018 issues.

John was the "life of the party" at family reunions with his many jokes and anecdotes, bringing forth peals of laughter from those in attendance. And, if given the opportunity, he was happy to pull out his harmonica to play a tune. However, his primary loves were those of the entire Seeborg family, especially his immediate family, including his wife, Jane, and their daughters, Suzanne and Kirsten (Kit). John worked as an insurance agent for most of his life and lived for many years in McMinnville, Oregon, until his death in 2002.

John thought that family history should be preserved. He encouraged his nephew, Lawrence, to investigate and write the WWII history of his brother, Arvid, who died in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in 1942 (*Cumtux*, Spring 2003). In the 1990s, John began writing the history of his immediate family. He completed this task on the Fourth of July in 1998. This family history was written primarily for his four grandchildren. However, he also donated a copy to the Clatsop County Historical Society for their archives. On the last page of his history, he said, "If the Society… finds short portions worth including in their publication, *Cumtux*, that will be all right with me." The following pages contain some of John's memories and impressions of his early life in Astoria taken from his family history, *A Finn From Astoria*.

Seeborgs In The Beginning

Prior to 1918, Russia was the ruler over Finland, which was sort of squeezed between Russia and Sweden. In the late 1880s, two families, unrelated and unknown to each other, chose to leave Finland for America. One was the Reinikka family, the other the Tolvanen family. Johan and Eva Maria Reinikka and three of their children, including a young girl named Fanny, settled in Astoria's fishing community at the mouth of the Columbia River. Frederick Tolvanen brought his family, including his young son, Victor, to the farming area near Kelso, Washington, on the Cowlitz River.

Not long after the family became settled, Victor Ferdinand Tolvanen, then about eleven, accompanied his father to the county courthouse, where his father petitioned the court to change his name to "Seeborg." From that day on, Victor, his brother Hugo, their sisters Ida and Anna, and their parents were to be known as "Seeborg." No one has heard of any reason for the change in name, only theories.

At age fifteen, Fanny Elvira Reinikka, her sister, Josefiina, and their brother, William, settled in Astoria with their parents while other siblings had previously settled elsewhere: Aldrick in Quincy, near Clatskanie, about forty miles upriver from Astoria; Edward and Jacob in a farming area called Brush Prairie, near Vancouver, Washington. (*Reinikka Ancestors and Descendants*, page 102-103)

Image courtesy of Lawrence Seeborg

Vic and Fanny Seeborg – circa 1920. About two years after their twins, John & Arvid were born.

Destiny had Victor and Fanny meet in Astoria about 1903. A romance developed, and the wedding took place on August 24th, 1904, barely two months after Fanny's seventeenth birthday. Victor was twenty-one. Children were born of this marriage at fairly regular intervals; first, Victor William ("Bill") on June 21st, 1905, then Hugo Henry on November 21st, 1906, Hannah Marie on August 8th, 1909, Hilma Elvira on January 21st, 1912, Edward Francis on October 22nd, 1913, and Helen Ida on January 24th, 1916.

CCHS Image #02.002.001.001

Twins, Arvid and John Seeborg
Born January 12, 1918
John was born about 20 minutes after Arvid on Victor and Fanny's farm below Columbia Heights near Kelso. Although Fanny gave birth to fifteen children, John and Arvid were her only twins and the only children not born in Astoria.

Shortly afterward, with three boys and three girls already in the not-yet-complete family, Victor and Fanny chose to leave the city as an opportunity came to acquire farmland below Columbia Heights near Kelso. However, heavy rains created extremely difficult farming conditions, so it became prudent to give up the farming venture. During those difficult times, on January 12th, 1918, to be specific, Fanny delivered a son, Arvid Eino. She told the doctor she expected another birth, but he doubted it and packed his bag to leave. But Fanny quickly became more certain. Fortunately, the doctor delayed his departure, for he was still there to deliver another son, John Edwin, twenty minutes after Arvid entered the world. It was quite apparent that the birth of the second twin was somewhat of a surprise. For years I have provided a fictionalized account of circumstances affecting the return of the family to Astoria a few months following the birth of us twins, contending that the folks gave up farming and returned to Astoria because children were born only one at a time in the city.

The family genealogy ends here, and brief (hopefully) episodes of my life experiences begin. This is my story. These are some of my recollections and reflections.

Growing Up In Church Hill

Astoria is located at the confluence of the Columbia and Youngs Rivers, ten miles from the mouth of the Columbia. The city has neighborhoods, which identify the various sections of town. From east to west, they are Alderbrook, nearest to Tongue Point, Uppertown, Downtown, Uniontown, Smith Point, and Astor Court that is the area farthest west in the city. On the hillside above Uniontown was a Finnish Congregational Church. The area surrounding the church was naturally called "Church Hill." Our father purchased a house next to the church.

Image courtesy of Lawrence Seeborg

The north side of Vic and Fanny's home facing the Columbia River

The house was a frame, two and a half story dwelling, including an attic. The boys had exclusive use of the two bedrooms in the attic. On the second floor were four bedrooms and one bathroom for all to share. The first floor consisted of what we called the "pantry" but would now be called the kitchen and a small dining room in which was a wood-burning cookstove. We called that room the kitchen. That floor also had a larger dining room, a "front" or living room, a back hall, and an entry at ground level; also, a front hall and an entry (front door). An outside stairway was needed for the front entry because the ground was about ten feet lower than the rear entry due to the ground's slope. In the basement was a wood furnace; Mother's laundry area (with her faithful "Maytag" washing machine); a low concrete enclosure designed to be the base for an oval washtub, with space in the supporting enclosure for a wood fire; storage space for several cords of firewood; and finally, an enclosure barely large enough to contain a toilet.

The south attic window view was limited to the neighborhood further up the hill and the forest beyond. The view from the north window was much more expansive. Visible below was most of Uniontown and the waterfront, the Columbia River flowing to the ocean, and Washington's hills across the river. The Uniontown waterfront included several salmon canneries, the Port of Astoria's three piers, and the Pillsbury Flour mill at the north end of Pier 1.

CCHS image 10.018.003

The east facade of the Taylor School in Uniontown, Astoria.

Taylor School

Immediately west of the house was a graveled playground across which was Taylor School. The playground had swings, a slide, and space where we played ball games such as touch-tackle football and softball. Taylor School was a three-story, wood-frame building with classrooms on the upper two floors, while on the first floor, there was a large wood-burning furnace and an area for recess play when the weather was bad. Much of the basement was used for the storage of firewood in three or four-foot lengths. One-room, portable buildings west of the main building were built to accommodate a post World War I increase in pupils. Also, there was a gymnasium in a wood frame building among the portable classrooms.

Ten feet east of our home was the Finnish Congregational Church. In fact, from our kitchen window, one could look across that ten-foot space directly into a church window and see the preacher in the pulpit and the worshipers in the front pews. The Rev. Koven was pastor there, and the parsonage was on the other side of the church building. Four Koven boys mingled with us Lutheran Seeborgs very well. Even our phone numbers were quite friendly: ours was 788-J, and theirs was 788-R.

The Rest Of Us

Bill, the eldest of the thirteen children who grew up at 249 Columbia Avenue, was thirteen

when our parents and eight children moved from Kelso. Lora Jean, the youngest, was born thirteen years later. Her birth date was February (you guessed it) the thirteenth, 1931. Arnold Walfred has the distinction of being the firstborn (February 20th, 1920) after the return to Astoria. Roy Rudolph was next (December 13th, 1922), then Kenneth George (September 30th, 1925). The string of boy babies, begun in 1918 with us twins, was ended when Judith Elaine was born on August 30th, 1927, the first girl baby in the family in more than eleven years. And then, as indicated earlier, came Lora Jean. In addition to the thirteen of us raised in Astoria, an infant died about 1908, and another (Barbara) died on April 5th, 1933, at the age of four months.

Bill and Alice Aspfors were married on September 4th, 1926, and brought June Elizabeth into the world on June 9th, 1927. Tragically, Alice passed away about two weeks later without leaving the hospital. Mother took June into the family "temporarily." She stayed with us twenty-one years until her marriage to Marvin Taylor on June 12th, 1948. For all practical purposes, she became a sister to those of us with whom she grew up. From that aspect, there were fourteen Seeborg siblings raised in that house.

Image courtesy of the author.

Vic & Fanny outside their home after an Astoria snowstorm January 2, 1949

Christmas At The "Big House"

Wow! How did they ever get that huge Christmas tree into the house? The house, many years later becoming known as "the big house," was where we moved to from Cowlitz County in 1918. One of my earliest recollections was when I was about four years old. I watched as big brothers Bill and Hugo struggled to get a large tree up the front stairs, through the front door into the hall, then make another extremely tight turn into the front room. I had to scoot almost to the top of the hall stairs to keep out of their way. Once they got the tree upright, I saw that the top was bent over where it reached

Image courtesy of Lawrence Seeborg

A Christmas at Vic and Fanny Seeborg's Astoria home.

the ceiling. Hearing me voice my concern, Hugo assured me he would cut a hole in the ceiling to allow room for the treetop.

Later, perhaps after a nap, I rushed to the tree and was relieved to see that Hugo had kept his promise; the treetop appeared to go right through the ceiling. I ran up the stairs to Hilma's room, located directly above the front room, but found no sign of the tree's top coming through the floor. I must have run up and down the stairs several times, trying to determine why the tree's top didn't poke itself up from the floor in Hilma's room.

Birthdays were not usually given a high priority in the family, but this lack was more than made up at Christmas when it appeared that we all celebrated Christ's birth as if it were our own. Each Christmas was pretty much like the others, with the only noticeable difference being the changing ages of the kids.

The responsibility of going into the woods for a fir tree was passed on to the eldest boy or boys. Trimming the tree was usually done by the girls. Hardly was the tree trimmed before wrapped packages began to appear under it. By Christmas Eve, the gift-wrapped packages were piled high and spread beyond the perimeter of the tree, making it difficult for us to keep count of how many we would be receiving individually. It seems that the rivalry was in numbers, not contents. Then, usually on December 24th, the last-minute gifts poured in. Of course, by that time, the suspense was so great, anticipation so high,

food was of little or no importance. Yet the older siblings saw to it that the younger ones ate something. Hannah was the recognized authority who ran the show, so to speak, during our parents' absence. Preparing a regular meal was out of the question. Mother and Dad probably ate sensibly, but a light snack was sufficient for the kids.

Finally, it became dark, and Santa Claus arrived, tinkling bells as he came up the stairway to the front door. He didn't knock, just walked in with a loud "Ho ho ho," entered the front room, and emptied a sack of gifts on the pile already there. He seemed to know us kids, calling some of us by name, but of course, that didn't surprise us. He would distribute three or four gifts then leave hastily, explaining he had so many children yet to see he must keep going. Some Christmases, he even called his reindeer by name. Usually, one or more of us claimed we heard the reindeer on the roof. The moment he left, someone would begin handing out packages. The excitement peaked as wrappings were torn off, and exclamations of joy and surprise filled the room. As the last of the gifts were opened, the count became important. "How many did you get? I got eight!" As soon as a "winner" was known, the awareness of what had been received sank in—books, clothing, games, toys; each item so very important.

One Christmas, my heart was set on a little printing set consisting of rubber letters and numbers with an ink pad. I was probably twelve. I knew every gift under the tree that had my name on it, and despite the many bold hints I'd made, none of them seemed to be the print set. On Christmas Eve, I slipped away and ran down the hill to Hellberg Drug and bought the set. I sneaked back into the house and to my room, where I did a quick job of wrapping and addressing the "gift" to me from"?". Unseen, I placed it under the tree and, when it was handed to me, I tried for an Academy Award. Hilma seemed to be the only one who caught on, but she kept still.

During the waning excitement, Mother and Dad would prepare for church and quietly leave, not even suggesting that we go to worship with them. This was a typical Christmas Eve during all the years Arvid and I were growing up. Perhaps others had slightly different memories, but they had to be very nearly the same.

Sunday School

As children of devout Christian parents, going to church and Sunday School was a simple fact of life; we just went. Mother's parents and older brother, Henry, lived on Floral Street, about a mile west of Church Hill. They were primary contributors and key builders of a church, the Finnish Apostolic

Image courtesy of Lawrence Seeborg

John with his cousin, Katherine Kuivala, ca. late 1920s
Catherine was the daughter of Vic Seeborg's sister, Anna Kuivala

Lutheran Church, approximately halfway between their homes. And it truly was Finnish; even the Sunday School classes were conducted in Finnish. But since all of Uniontown, including Church Hill, was virtually a little Finland, speaking the language was natural. Almost all of the kids were bilingual.

Downtown, east of Uniontown, was a Methodist Church that was purely English. A couple named Turner decided to conduct a Sunday School in Uniontown to provide English Bible lessons to Finn children as well as non-Finns. At the foot of West Bond Street hill was a salmon cannery, Sanborn's, which had a warehouse facing the street. A portion of that warehouse was made available to the Turners, who then began their English Sunday School. Soon it was being used to capacity, and Sanborn's expanded the space to accommodate older children up to high school age. Most parents were delighted to have their children attend the school because it was American, even though it was Methodist.

One Christmas, we had our usual Nativity play performed by the pupils, and Hilma was Jesus' mother, Mary. The Christmas decorations included a fir tree on which dozens of small candles were clamped to branches. Hilma wore a white wig during the play and got too close to a candle. Her wig caught on fire. Mrs. Turner calmly stepped up and removed the wig from Hilma's head to extinguish the fire, and the play continued. We kids were momentarily frightened, but we recovered quickly. Hilma was hardly aware of what happened.

At another Christmas program, a few years later, Wally Johansen, Arvid, and I had to sing, "We Three Kings of Orient Are." I never did learn where all of the costumes came from for the various programs, but they were always there. I had to wear one often enough.

The Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church

Our parents were deeply involved in the Finnish church on Floral Street. Dad would always be the first to open the church on Sundays

and whenever a special function was scheduled. After the depression hit us, in about 1931, we no longer had a car, so, regardless of weather conditions, Dad continued being the first person at the church. He walked. He would walk a trail over the hill on dry days, but on wet or snowy days, he had to walk down to Alameda Street, then west several blocks to a steep, long stairway up to the church on Floral. It was somewhat of an arduous climb. Once there, Dad would, more often than not, have to build a fire in the wood furnace located in the basement. A large vent went directly above the furnace to the sanctuary above. It took quite a while to get the sanctuary warm. Dad taught Sunday School and, in the summer, a Confirmation Class, which necessitated his leaving his business every morning for two weeks.

Mother's contributions to church activities were tremendous. She regularly had out of town preachers, and their wives stay at our home as guests. Even when we had no house guests, Mother frequently had church visitors over for Sunday dinners. Our home could have been considered an extension of the church, especially on Sundays.

Every year or two, the church held regular revival services that were all-day sessions over several days. Visitors from sister churches in Portland, Longview, Quincy,

Image courtesy of Lawrence Seeborg

Left to right: Dagmar Kauppi, Anna (Seeborg) Kuivala with her daughter, Katherine, and John. Anna was Victor Seeborg's sister, born three years after him in 1886.

Minnesota, and Michigan came for those meetings. Many preachers from those areas served in the pulpit. Mother made sure we had some visitors as house guests. On those occasions at the revivals, meals were provided and served in the basement dining area of the church. During mid-morning and mid-afternoon coffee breaks, the ladies served homemade sweet bread with the coffee. Mother and others baked large batches of "kahvi leipää" at home to take to the church. There also were lunch and supper meals prepared in the church kitchen. Again, Mother and others brought the food to be prepared in the church kitchen. For us local kids, it was a picnic. We ate our meals at the church; we

made occasional appearances in the sanctuary during services, but we mostly played games, usually on the hillsides nearby.

The clean-up committees seemed to always include our mother. The women were dedicated to keeping the church spotless. And remember, many modern gadgets and cleansers, such as detergent, were not on the market then as they are now. Each spring, the ladies, our mother included, of course, did a major housecleaning of the sanctuary. Walls, floors, windows, benches, and pews were all given a thorough cleansing.

Confirmation School

Our dad taught the Confirmation School Arvi and I attended, along with about fifteen other thirteen-year-olds. Our graduation required that we answer questions from the catechism in Finnish, then have our first communion. It was a hot Sunday afternoon, and many of the church members were present as we finally got to step up and kneel at the altar for our very first communion. Rev. Ojalehto placed a small wafer on each tongue then gave each a small sip of "wine" (actually berry juice). Tommy S. wasn't satisfied with a bare sip when his turn came, so he assisted the preacher with the silver mug, tilting it enough to get a generous swallow. The preacher had to refill the cup. Arvi, being next, appreciated Tommy's act, so he emulated it. When my turn arrived, the preacher held the cup tightly, barely moistening my lips, and thus he continued with the remaining pupils. Oh, how I would have enjoyed a small swallow.

Will The Real Eddie Please Stand?

At age five, Arvid and I had a habit of playing in the Taylor School playground, and we were usually quite noisy, playing cops and robbers, imitating police car sirens, and shooting imaginary guns. Brigitta Kankkonen, a teacher at Taylor School and one of Mother's closest friends, was at our house for lunch one day in mid-September 1923. Arvid and I were asked if we would like to start school immediately, and we agreed with enthusiasm. We would normally have begun at mid-term in January, just about the time we reached age six. Three of our playmates, who were five months or more older than we twins, had started school earlier that month, and we were probably envious. The teachers were probably instrumental in encouraging that decision in order to reduce the noise we made outdoors during classes. Who knows?

Who can forget his very first day of school? We went to register the next morning and were directed to a specific portable classroom where we met Miss Broughton. To Arvid

Image courtesy of Lawrence Seeborg

Victor Seeborg with his confirmation class – early 1930's
Lutheran Apostolic Church – Astoria, Oregon
Back row: John at the far right, his brother Arvid at the far left and their father, Vic Seeborg, who taught the confirmation class, in the center of the back row.
Front row: Reverend Tapani Ojalehto

Image courtesy of Lawrence Seeborg

John and his sister, Hannah (right) with cousin Roma
Roma Rietala was the daughter of Fiina Rietala, the sister of John & Hannah's mother, Fanny.

and me, it was an adventure that we played to the hilt. I was asked my name, and I said, "Edwin." I wanted to be called "Eddie," like my older brother, so I gave my middle name. When asked his name, Arvid said, "Eino," giving his middle name so as not to be upstaged. The next day Arvid changed his mind, having been persuaded at home to do so. Whether any effort was made to get me to change to my true first name, I cannot recall. In any event, not until we advanced to the fifth grade and began attending Capt. Robert Gray School did I revert to "John," and then only because brother Eddie was in the ninth grade at the same school. Two Eddie Seeborgs was deemed inadvisable by others in the family.

An Exciting Easter

We twins were five, six, or maybe even seven when dredges in the river were pumping mud and sand into the waterfront, creating a landfill at the Uniontown waterfront. One Easter Sunday, Arvid and I were ready for Sunday school and church long before it was time to leave. Somehow we drifted down to the waterfront where the fill was almost complete and where a newly built rock bulkhead was holding the sand in, and the water was draining out. On that Easter Sunday, the dredge pumps were idle, but a few very wet spots remained. A small group of rowdies had built a bonfire near one of the larger saucer-shaped sumps. They taunted and dared us to run across it. Arvid, being bolder than I, decided to take the dare. He got a running start and was almost across the extremely slippery muck when he fell and soon was ankle-deep in the mud. He was sinking slowly, unable to move his feet, and was in mud up to his knees when I thought I could pull him out. I crouched at the edge of the depression, and we were able to join hands. I pulled with all my strength and probably managed to pull him a little way when I slipped and slid in too. The laughter from the "big boys" rang in my ears. I was close enough to the edge to get out, and those mean

guys finally decided to help pull Arvid out. Our brand new Easter clothing was covered with mud. You can imagine the reception we got at home. By that time, we were all late for Sunday school, so everyone left except us twins and Hannah. I don't recall the rest of the day, but I imagine Hannah saw to it that we were cleaned up for church post-haste.

The South Jetty Is Built

Not long after the dredge completed its job and the landfill at the Uniontown waterfront had dried, trains began rolling along the riverside of the landfill. Each train pulled dozens of flat cars, which carried huge boulders from the Columbia River Gorge area. Several times daily, these trains rumbled by on their way to the mouth of the river, dumping the large rocks to create the south jetty. By the time the trains began to appear on the scene, the kids in our neighborhood had developed the sandlot into a sports "complex," having room there for baseball, football, and track. It was not unusual for men to use the railroad tracks as a path, usually to get from one cannery to another. One day we hardly noticed a man on the tracks until we heard a train whistle blow. Obviously, the man did not hear the several toots and whistles of warning coming from behind him, so many of us boys ran frantically towards him, yelling to alert him. With its tremendous load in tow, the train was unable to stop in time and hit the man who rolled to the side of the track. An ambulance arrived several minutes later. The man was dead already. Literally, hundreds of trips were made by steam locomotives pulling flat cars of huge boulders to the south jetty before it was complete. To this day, that jetty protects the channel over the bar for shipping as well as pleasure boats.

The Radio Era Is Born

One day, during the earliest days of radio, my brothers Bill and Hugo brought one home. It was considerably different from the radios of the post World War II period. I guess it was about two feet long and almost a foot high. It had three dials on the front, each about four inches in diameter with numbers around the borders. There were other controls, but the three numbered dials seemed to be the key to its operation. They had to be turned precisely to certain numbers in order to pick up a station. Headphones were necessary for listening, and the first time Hugo put the headphones on me, I heard music. That amazed and thrilled me. Later, perhaps several weeks or even months afterward, Hugo brought home a loudspeaker shaped like a large horn. No one paid much attention until he rushed from the front room to the kitchen, calling,

"Come here, everybody, come here and listen. You can hear it clear across the room!"

A radio station with call letters "KFJI" was transmitting in Astoria. When we twins were about eight or nine, the station broadcast a request program every evening. One song, in particular, was requested most frequently; it was "Barnacle Bill The Sailor." All the kids in Church Hill, or even in the entire city for all I knew, were trying to learn the many verses of the lyrics that we attempted to sing at play. I can still remember many of the verses, but here's just a small sample:

"Who's that knocking at my door?
Who's that knocking at my door?
Who's that knocking at my door?"
Cried the fair, young maiden.
"It's only me from over the sea,"
Said Barnacle Bill the sailor.
"I'm all dressed up like a Christmas tree,"
etc., etc.. etc.

A few years later, KFJI owners moved and took their call letters with them to Klamath Falls.

Quincy

Mother's sister, Fiina, was married to a farmer named Jack Rietala, an avowed communist. They had a hundred sixty acres of rich farmland near Quincy, which was no more than a general store and railroad depot a few miles east of Clatskanie. Their two daughters, Vieno and Roma, were, naturally, our first cousins. Vieno taught school for a while in a two-room country schoolhouse near their farm. Roma, the younger of the two, was a year older than Arvi and I. We had other relatives who farmed nearby: twin cousins Ben and Edwin Reinikka, their brother Joe, and sister, Hilda, who was married to Bill Jarvi.

For years, a favorite destination in the summer was Quincy. One summer, when I was about seven, it was arranged for my older sister, Hilma, and me to take the train there. At the last minute, Hilma became somewhat reluctant to go but luckily did not cancel the trip. We boarded the train (probably my very first train ride) and were hardly on our way when Hilma's reserve collapsed, and she began crying. Homesick already. The conductor managed to calm her down, and we reached Quincy, all right. But as soon as she saw Aunt Fiina, she burst into tears again, wanting to go home. We continued to the farm but had to abort our visit after a few very short days, much to my dismay. This was about 1925.

A Memorable Birthday

At age eight, Arvid and I had an ongoing love affair with our only sister-in-law, brother Bill's wife, Alice. She was wonderful to us. In 1926, newlyweds Bill and Alice rented a cottage out in the Youngs River area. I don't recall for certain what Bill's job was, but it seems

to me he was driving a truck for a lumberyard. I got to spend an entire weekend with them in the country "helping" Alice bake, and I think we did a little gardening. I still remember Alice making waffles for breakfast. Arvid had a weekend there at another time.

By January of 1927, Bill and Alice had moved to an apartment in the Astor Court district on the corner of Alameda and Agate Streets, directly opposite Simonson's Agate Grocery. Alice decided to have a birthday party for Arvid and me on the twelfth of that month, our ninth birthday. I learned she had invited some neighborhood playmates and some Sunday school friends. The party was to begin early in the afternoon, and Arvid left home a good half an hour before it was time. This annoyed me somewhat, but I still waited for the appropriate time and walked along Alameda Street to the apartment house, arriving right on time. Alice greeted me and invited me in, saying she was glad to see me because I could help her with some baking. I became concerned that I had come on the wrong day, for she acted as if she was surprised I had come. I dared not mention a party, for it was obvious there was none. Alice waited a few minutes and then probably saw that my disappointment was peaking. She must have given some sort of signal because suddenly doors opened, and kids poured into the room yelling, "Surprise!" Even Arvid was in on the surprise. I think his early arrival spoiled their chance to surprise him. The afternoon was marvelous, with games, gifts, cake and cookies. Alice left nothing out. That was the only birthday party given Arvid and me during our childhood.

Captain Robert Gray School

When Arvid and I entered Capt. Robert Gray School, as fifth graders, we joined brother Eddie and sister Helen there. This time I registered as "John," not "Edwin." Two years later, entering junior high school, Arvid began getting involved more in sports and I, mostly in studies and newsboy work that took up much of my time. To Arvi, delivering papers was somewhat degrading. It also interfered with his drive to become an athlete of note. Miss Cecilia Beyler had been the school principal for several years before Arvi, and I entered. With her at the helm, the students learned early to respect authority. Yet, she was one who never displayed anger or annoyance. When she decided to enter politics and run for the office of the county school superintendent, she asked Bill Hutchinson and me to distribute campaign literature in the eastern sections of the city. We felt honored. Unfortunately, she still didn't win the election.

Where Champions Began

At Gray School, the gymnasium was virtually a wall-to-wall basketball court for boys and a volleyball court for girls. A tiny balcony provided space for a few spectators, but a regular rooting section was not feasible. A small group of boys formed a nucleus for the major athletic teams, basketball and football, and won city junior high championships in both those sports.

Howard Reed was the coach. Later, in high school, five or six former Gray School players were on the basketball teams, which won state championships in 1934 and 1935 under John Warren's coaching. He had already brought two or three state championship trophies to Astoria High. The University of Oregon hired Warren to be its freshman basketball coach and then gave scholarships to some graduating Astoria players. They continued as a group in college and won the NCAA national basketball championship in 1939. Players who I remember from those days were Wally Johansen, Ted Sarpola, Bobby Anet, and Toivo Piippo. Another Astorian on that championship team was Earl Sandness from Uppertown. Still, another player on that team was Evert McNeely of Portland, who moved to Astoria after World War II. He and his wife, Jean, became close friends with my wife, Jane, and me.

That same year, 1939, my younger brother, Roy, was a starter on the high school team for three years. Wally Palmberg was the coach then and won two trophies, including a state championship in 1941. Roy won all-state honors twice and the most valuable player once. Our younger brother, Ken, followed Roy as a Gray School starter. He also started on the Astoria High School team that won a trophy at the state tourney when he was awarded all-state second-team honors. Roy went to the University of Oregon on an academic scholarship. He was a starter on the Oregon team until the war interrupted his schooling. Ken soon joined the navy, and he and Roy were both starters on the Oregon team after World War II. By that time, Astoria had become recognized as the mecca for basketball players in Oregon. Pride in the neighborhood we call Church Hill has overcome modesty when I report that Anet, Johansen, and the Seeborg brothers all grew up there. Sarpola and Piippo grew up a few blocks below Church Hill.

Priorities

One morning, as we were preparing for grade school, we were reminded more firmly than usual to not forget our lunches. It was the practice then, at Gray School, to leave our lunch bags on the benches

in the lunchroom. I was certain that I had not forgotten mine, but at lunchtime, I could not find it, so I ran over the hill all the way home, rushed into the house, and called, "Aitti" (Finnish for mother). No answer. Not even three-year-olds June and Judith were at home. I didn't spot a lunch bag in the kitchen, so I went to the foot of the stairs and again called for Mother. Our family doctor appeared at the head of the stairs, looked down at me, and, with a smile, said, "Your mother has just given you a new baby sister." "Ask her where my lunch is," I replied. Obviously, Lora Jean's birth was not of primary importance to a thirteen-year-old hungry boy in a hurry.

Cigarettes

Tobacco companies were also searching, not for talent but for customers. On several occasions when classes were dismissed, students were greeted near the school exits by Chesterfield or Lucky Strike representatives with handouts of free packs of cigarettes. They were quite successful in increasing their market of smokers, mostly because no one then realized how hazardous the habit was and how difficult it was to quit. What we heard was that smoking was a pleasure and gave one a lift. It was then that Arvi and I began smoking. Arvi smoked until his death at age twenty-four. I smoked until I was about fifty-three-years-old, and from the day I quit, I never lit another cigarette.

Newsboy "Career"

"Lindy Wins" was the banner headline on an "extra" the *Astoria Budget* printed on May 21st, 1927. I had my first paper route at the time. Earlier that afternoon, when we carriers picked up our regular papers for delivery, we were told to hurry back after completing our routes because an extra was being printed. I practically ran the entire route, then caught a city bus back to the *Budget*. I picked up as many copies of the "extra" as I could squeeze into my canvas bag and returned to Uniontown by bus. I don't remember where I learned what to do, but I was off and running down Taylor Street waving a paper over my head and yelling, "Extra! Extra! Lindy Wins." I sold every paper in a few minutes. "Lindy," of course, was Charles Lindbergh, who had landed in Paris that day, shortly after 10:00 p.m. French time, about 2:00 p.m. our time.

I turned in my money the next afternoon and received the sum of fifty cents for my sales. I had never been so well paid before, and it felt good. It was fun. I was already nine-years-old, and it appeared to be my destiny to become a career newsboy.

Weathering Storms

It didn't always rain in Astoria. A cloudless sky, with a zephyr blowing, was not unusual. The unusual conditions were Sou'westers, Nor'westers, and heavy snowfalls. Rain, sometimes light and often torrential, was normal. But like postmen, newspaper carriers were expected to make their "appointed rounds."

When a Nor'wester blew in from the ocean, it seemed to come the ten miles up the river from the bar and strike Astoria with the ferocity of a hurricane. Usually, my route—whether delivering *Budgets, Oregonians*, *Oregon Journals*, *or Portland Telegrams*—included the pilot boat and the Coast Guard cutter *Algonquin*, which were moored at Pier 3 of the Port of Astoria. It was actually quite difficult to walk into the wind and rain. The distance from Taylor Street (later renamed "Marine Drive") to the office at Pier 1, then to Pier 3 seemed much farther than usual. The pilot boat crew was always appreciative, and on stormy, windy days, I received a royal welcome with hot coffee, a snack, and cookies or cake. Coat, jacket, shirt, and shoes were often dried and were cozily warm to put back on even if not completely dry. It's possible that I looked forward to a stormy day so I could be pampered by the pilot boat's crew.

Occasionally, when time permitted, I would board freighters, which often docked at Pier 2. On one memorable occasion, I went aboard an English freighter and found my way to the galley, where I sold the few extras I had. Before I could leave, I was given souvenirs, one being a gallon can of English jam to take home to Mother. She was really delighted.

I delivered morning papers for a few years, sometimes having an afternoon route also. My preference was the morning deliveries. Always feeling the need for hot coffee when I got up, I frequently found the kindling too wet to light, so I burned newspapers in the old wood stove to heat water for coffee. Once the coffee was ready, I would have kahvi leipää (coffee bread) that Mother had baked. Then, I'd usually walk down Lincoln Street to Bond Street, and over the hill to town to pick up my papers. The Greyhound bus from Portland would drop off the *Oregonians* at the auditorium, which was at the foot of 12th Street, or in that vicinity. Sometimes I'd be called from second-story windows on Astor Street to sell a paper. I'd enter the building at the foot of the stairs and wait for the girl to come down. I doubt that I knew what a red light district was. One of my early morning deliveries was to a Greek restaurant on Bond Street where they always had something for me to eat, such as eggs or pancakes or French toast.

Back to stormy days. Early one morning before sunrise, following a day of quite heavy snow and a night of freezing rain, I left home and experienced walking in snow that had a frozen crust on it. With each step, I crunched through the icy crust into snow above my ankles. As if that wasn't enough, there were numerous tree branches, which had broken and fallen due to ice weighing them down. Also, occasional trees had crashed and brought down power lines, and many other lines were downed by the heavy ice forming on them. Walking in the middle of the street was like being in the center of a fireworks display as flashes and sparks from power lines lit the sky. I'm sure I wasn't adequately aware of how hazardous such conditions were, although I carefully avoided stepping near the wires. Just before I reached the auditorium, the power company cut the power off and had it not been for the snow, it would have been too dark to continue. My friends in the Greek restaurant lit kerosene lamps and had something for me to eat by the time I reached them. It was a very exciting morning, and after completing my route, my mother fixed me a hot breakfast on the woodstove. School was canceled, so several of us neighborhood kids tried to make West Franklin Street into a sled run, but the frozen crust of snow prevented sledding that morning. I remember people calling the weather conditions a "silver thaw." There were other "silver thaws" over the years, but none quite as severe as that one.

A Major "Ow-Ee"

There were times when being a carrier was a problem, like the time a friend came with me, and I rode my scooter. Well, I was scooting down a hill between Bond Street and Astor when the bolt connecting the front upright handlebar to the platform came off, causing me to go head first down the hill. I hurt my wrist pretty badly, so my friend had to carry my scooter and deliver the papers. I knew the route; he didn't. We finished the route, and I got home, suffering the pain from my injured wrist. Someone took me to the hospital where our family doctor met us, and x-rays revealed a clean fracture of that wrist.

Sales Opportunities and Bonuses

Despite storms and occasional "problems," although no more fractures, there were many rewards to be derived. One time, I think it was when I was thirteen, John Verschueren, the circulation manager of the *Budget*, reprimanded us carriers for not taking a sales contest seriously. Normally, we received a bonus of twenty-five cents for each new subscription we turned in. The contest winner was

to get an additional dollar for each new subscription, and the contest was ending the next day. On the bus en route to Uniontown, an idea occurred to me. The monthly rate for the paper was sixty-five cents. If I gave a new customer the paper, free for the first month, and won the contest, I would still be sixty cents ahead. So, I made an offer to many non-subscribers to deliver to them a month of *Budgets* and, there would be no charge if they were not pleased. Twenty-three new customers subscribed that evening. I don't recall any new customers declining to pay when I made my collections, nor do I recall any of them canceling. That being true, winning the contest earned me twenty-eight dollars and seventy-five cents. In one evening! And that was in 1931 when the Great Depression was on.

Once, I accidentally opened the door to another sales opportunity. I was about twelve and had an *Oregonian* route when, one Sunday morning, the manager erroneously gave me about ten more papers than my normal allotment. When I completed my deliveries, I stopped at home for something to eat, then headed for town to return the surplus papers. I reached the top of Franklin Street about 8:00 that morning, and, on an impulse, I yelled, "Or-ee-go-nian," loud and clear. I think I gave the yell only once before people appeared on front porches and called, "Here." I sold all of the papers in a few minutes. It was like discovering gold.

I ordered twenty extra papers for the next Sunday and repeated the previous Sunday's activity at the same location and at the same time. The twenty didn't last much longer than the ten papers a week earlier. I made a cart from old wheels, a wooden apple box, and a stick for a handle. I got a friend to help me with my route and ordered twenty-five extra papers, and together we sold every one easily. Of course, I paid him. The Sunday *Oregonians* sold for ten cents, and I believe my profit was five cents each. We continued capitalizing on that bonanza for a few more Sundays. I don't remember the circumstances that caused us to stop.

Taylor School Razed

Shortly after Arvi and I completed the fourth grade at Taylor School, the school board closed the school. Pure coincidence. Rev. Koven must have made the high bid to raze the building, and slowly the building was taken down, piece by piece. Salvageable lumber was stacked on the schoolyard until the school was completely leveled. Then the Rev. Koven acquired an old flatbed truck and, with his boys, hauled truckload after truckload by ferry across the Columbia to Naselle, another Finnish community a

short distance from the river in Washington. There he built a home and a church. The entire project must have taken about ten years—or longer.

Another "Ow-Ee"

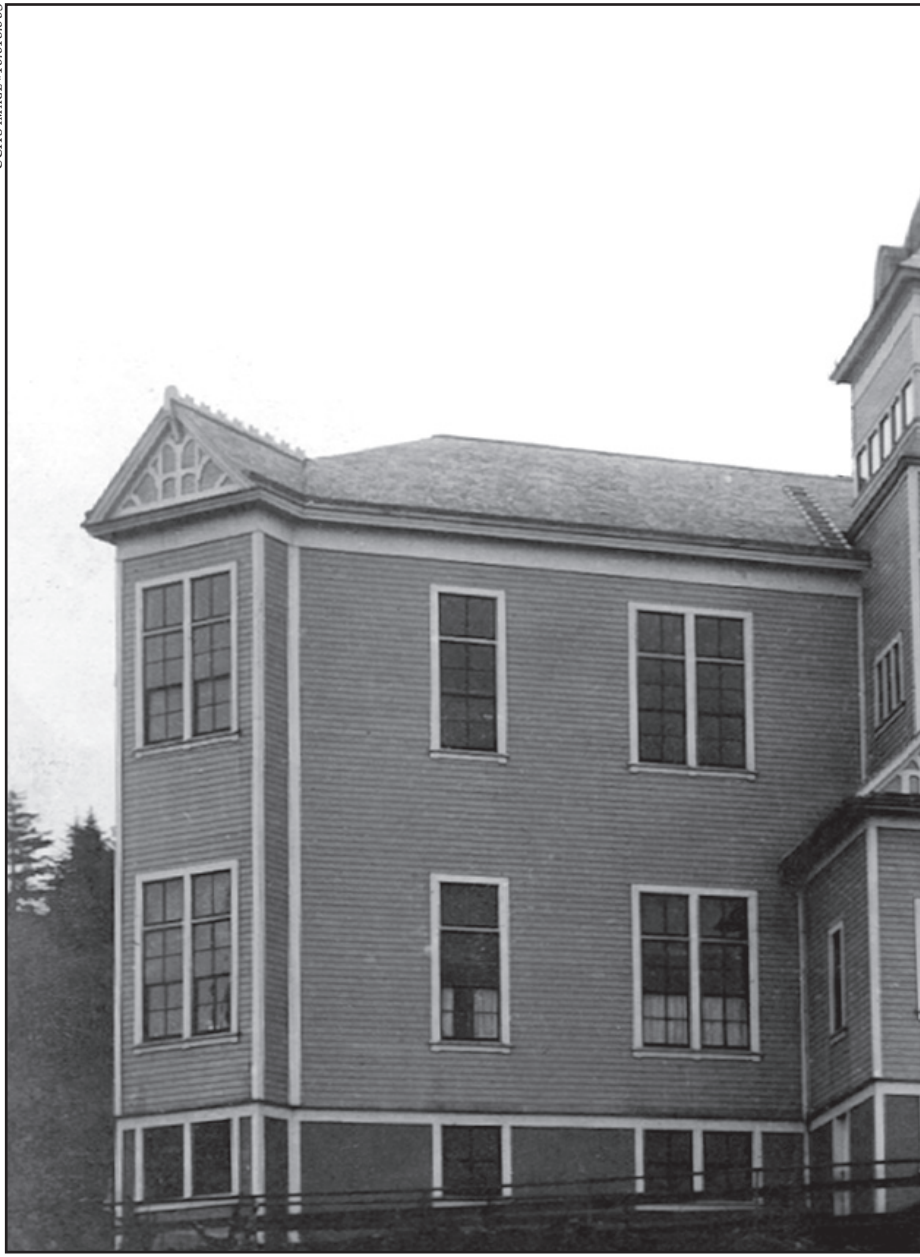
During the time the lumber was stacked in the schoolyard, we played games around the lumber piles. One such game was "andy-1-over." One time, instead of running around a pile of lumber to escape opponents, I climbed atop the stack and fell off headfirst. The only damage to me was a fractured wrist. It was numb and had an unnatural bend to it. I ran into the house and called for my mother. She quickly intercepted Rudy, a neighbor who was driving home for lunch. Mother and I got into his car, and off we went. By this time, the numbness had worn off, and I felt every bounce and vibration that old Chevrolet made. They took me to the doctor who had Rudy hold me tight while he held my arm by the elbow and, with the other hand, pulled my hand firmly, gave it a twist, and a slight push. The bone was reset. He wrapped a plaster of Paris splint on my arm, put it in a sling, and sent us on our way. The ride home was somewhat painful.

Saunas

Saturday saunas were as much a way of life with us Finns as was oatmeal for breakfast and roast beef for Sunday dinner. There were at least two commercial saunas in town, the Neptune Steam Baths on the east side of Bond Street hill and Union Steam Baths on Taylor Street in the Uniontown business section. But around the residential areas were private saunas, which friends and neighbors visited for their Saturday saunas. A block east of our home was the Niemi sauna. Halfway up W. Franklin Street above us was Mannila's (later renamed Manners) and over the hill to the west was Uncle Henry's very popular sauna.

Without trying to describe the heating process, the result was a very clear steam, which emanated from superheated rocks when water was sprayed on them. The sauna building was fairly small and consisted of two rooms: the dressing room and the other the steam room. In many private saunas, there would be a small opening between the rooms in which a pane of glass was installed. A shelf in front of the glass held a kerosene lamp, which provided light primarily for the steam room. Normally, there was a cup on that shelf for cash contributions, there being somewhat of an understanding among the "guests" that the sauna wasn't necessarily free. A dime was an adequate contribution. In the steam room were benches built usually at three levels, which provided varying degrees of heat,

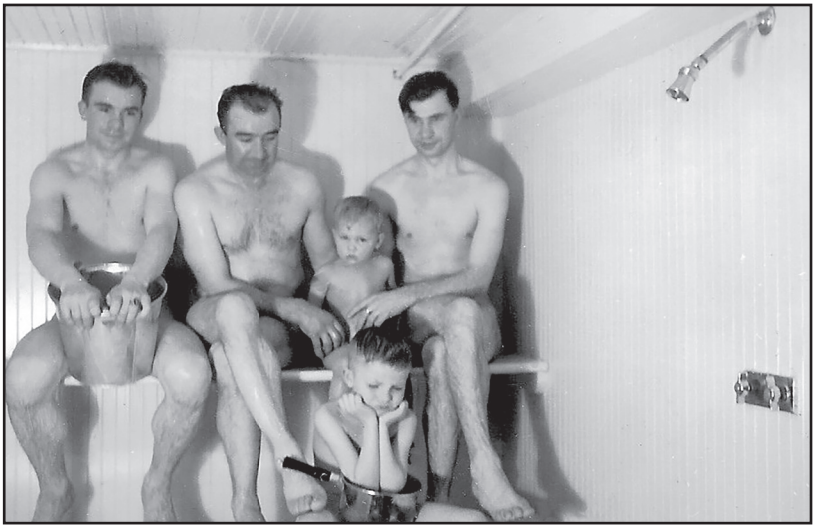
CCHS image #10.018.003



This elementary and junior high school was perched on an Astoria hi
was located just across the school playground to the left in this photo. Grades on
fourth grade at Taylor School before it was closed and then resum

llside overlooking the Columbia River. Vic and Fanny Seeborg's home
e through eight were taught here. John and his twin brother, Arvid, completed the
ed their studies in the fifth grade at Captain Robert Gray School.

Image courtesy of Lawrence Seeborg



The Seeborg's sauna at their Astoria Home
February 21, 1942. Vic and Fanny had a Finnish sauna in the basement of their home that was used by family members and visitors. Left to right: Three of Vic and Fanny's sons, Arnold, Hugo and Eddie with his two year-old son, Lawrence. In the front is Hugo's son, Jimmy.

the top tier, of course, being the hottest. They also served as steps by which one could get to the uppermost bench. It was customary that saunas provide hemlock branches, tied at the bases, to form switches which one could use to gently whip one's own body. To most of us in my generation, it was like torture. It was even quite uncomfortable just to be seated near a person who switched himself.

The men always took saunas, in a group and the women likewise. I'm uncertain which gender bathed first. There always seemed to be someone who required more heat and would toss a saucepan of water onto the rocks, creating another wave of "löyly" (steam), which increased the heat considerably. Upon completing the bath, visitors would usually congregate at the host's home (at least at Uncle Henry's) for coffee and "kahvi leipää," making the Saturday sauna a social event.

USS Constitution ("Old Ironsides")

In the early 1930s, there was a fundraiser, which involved only school children in America. Money was needed to save the *USS. Constitution* from having to be destroyed. Better known as "Old Ironsides," the frigate had been launched on October 21st, 1797. The navy had been demobilized in 1785 after the Revolutionary War and was established anew on

March 27th, 1794. Two frigates, the *Constellation* and the *Constitution* were the first warships built in this country for the United States Navy. The *Constitution* was still afloat in Boston harbor over 130 years later when it was first decided to destroy it. The Congress dared not appropriate taxpayers' money to save the relic from destruction, no matter the sentimental and historical value, but the American people wanted to preserve it. So the idea of school children raising funds was born.

The idea spread like wildfire to all school districts in the nation: let the kids give their pennies to save the ship. It went even further when tens of thousands of kids skipped lunch one day and contributed their lunch money. Adequate funds were raised, and the restoration was completed. ''Old Ironsides," once again seaworthy, was then put on tour to visit seaports from Boston to Jacksonville, into the Gulf of Mexico to Galveston, and through the Panama Canal to San Diego, San Francisco, Astoria, and Seattle. School children could board it and see what had been accomplished with their pennies.

In the early spring of 1933, the magnificent old ship crossed the Columbia River bar and entered the river, docking at Astoria. There were hundreds of people watching her get moored for her ten-day stay. Brother Bill, at this time active in the Red Cross, was to handle first aid in the area. After boarding it a couple of times, I was so enamored by such a beautiful, historic vessel that I decided to be the lifeguard in the unlikely event that someone might fall overboard. There was a rowboat tied nearby, and I "borrowed" it. During the ten days, I was in the rowboat many more hours than I was in school. Frequently, as I left home for school, I was drawn to the port docks as if by a powerful magnet. I did my best to be secretive, but later I learned that Dad and the school principal, Emmett Towler, were aware of my activities and simply kept quiet on the subject. Incidentally, Arvid and I had passed the Senior Life Guard tests a year or two earlier, so I felt qualified to assume that responsibility. Not one single person fell overboard, denying me my chance to demonstrate my prowess as a lifeguard.

Every day, busload after busload of children arrived at the dock to visit "Old Ironsides." They came from as far away as Idaho, Montana, eastern Oregon, Washington, and probably northern Nevada. Of course, I didn't spend all of my time rowing the skiff in the harbor. I boarded the frigate often and probably knew it better than anyone other than its crew.

Halloween Mischief

The Church Hill boys were known in the neighborhood to be clean-cut, red-blooded, athletic, highly competitive, bright, All-American kids. Yeah! And that must have included the Seeborg twins. Our days of playing "kick the can" or "run, sheep, run" were over by that Halloween when (circa 1931) we gathered near the church to make plans for the evening. The most interesting suggestion was to go down to Alameda Street that was being paved. There we saw that one lane was newly paved, those black, ball-shaped oil lamps guarding it from traffic. The other lane was open to one-way traffic for about fifty yards. When no cars were in sight, some of the boys dashed from hiding places in the bushes and moved the lamps to the unpaved lane. Soon headlights of two cars approaching from the east were in sight. The first car drove smack into the fresh cement, and before the second car could stop, it, too, was stuck.

As planned, we scattered in all directions, Arvid and I dashing down the street to a stairway, which ran up to Floral Street, then over the hill on a trail we knew well until we were home. We managed to enter the house by the front door and reach our bedroom in the attic undetected. A while later, we heard a car drive up to the house, and someone came to the front door. It was two stories directly below our bedroom window. Through the slightly ajar window, we heard our father greet the visitor and realized it was the chief of police. He asked Dad if the twins were home, and Dad thought we were but would check. Arvid and I got into bed and under the covers very quickly, then Dad entered the room and switched the light on. He returned to the chief and assured him the twins were in bed. We never heard another word of the stunt we had participated in, not even from the other kids involved.

John Seeborg's recollections of his boyhood in Astoria will be continued in a future issue of Cumtux magazine.

Several histories related to the Astoria Seeborg family are on file in the CCHS archives. A number of these histories, including Merle Reinikka's Reinikka Ancestors and Descendants*, are also online at the LDS Family History site.*

Interview with Ralph Norgaard
February 14, 2020

from the Archives

On February 14, 2020, Ralph Norgaard, Astoria High School graduate of 1957, sat down to talk about the Torcher Club students started at AHS about 1955. He then reminisced about his visits to Deep River, Washington, college sports, work experience, and deep sea-fishing.

There was a group of us taking algebra with Mrs. Wheeler down on the east end of the third floor of the old high school building on Jerome Ave. It may have been our sophomore year. Anyway, I remember walking down the hall one day with a group of classmates. And for some unknown reason, I said, "So here we go, we're going in that old 'torture hole' again." The class taught by Mrs. Wheeler really wasn't torture, but it was difficult, and she taught us a lot. The name caught on and we talked about making it formal.

We asked Mrs. Wheeler if we could have a club and she said fine. So, we called it the "Torcher Hole Club," a play on the words torch (a light) and torture.

And so, one of the things we did was put a string all along one of the walls of the class room, and we cut cartoons out of magazines and hung 'em up there. We had maybe fifty to sixty cartoons. That's how it all started. Then we thought, "Well, if we're going to have a club, we should be an official club and in the Zephyrus," the high school annual. So, we went to the principal, and Mrs. Wheeler came too, and she said it was fine with her.

And by golly, we organized the club. We made the rules and regulations. We were a regular club just like the Hi-Y or the Spanish club. We were the "Torcher Club."

Then in our Junior year, we started doing skits and assemblies. Oh, we had fun with that.

One time we pretended to sing to Harry Belafonte's Banana boat song. We mimicked the words, never actually singing. A couple times, we played gangsters and cops.

We were just having a great time and we never abused it and the students loved this. We did the skits on quite a few Fridays during the noon sports pep assemblies, to help raise enthusiasm for the games.

Then the next year when we were seniors, Henry Sjoblom came up to me and told me I should play "Elvis."

Elvis was suddenly becoming really popular then in 1956 and 1957. The Liberty Theater was going to play his first big movie. To advertise it, they had a life size cardboard cutout of Elvis at the front of the theater.

When we saw that cutout, we knew we had to have it. We planned how we were going to take it. Bob Herbst had a 1947 Packard black four-door sedan and was driving. Mike Howell and Garry Manners was with us and possibly Larry Burback?

When we pulled up at the theater, the lady was in there selling tickets and I said "Okay, I'll go talk to the lady, I'll get her attention. You guys slip up and you take that cardboard cutout 'cause we gotta have it up in our math room!"

Yeah, I got her attention and they grabbed it and threw it in the car. The car was pretty slow, but we gunned it. Manners was running alongside the car trying to get in and we managed to get him in.

So now Elvis Presley was up there in our math class room.

We needed to do a skit. Henry Sjoblom said to me: "You gotta be Elvis Presley!"

I said "I can't do it." He said "Why not?"

"They'll laugh at me. I'll make a mockery of it. You know Elvis is God. He's just big time. And then you know that his gyrations and the guitar and all that kind of stuff. I don't want to make a fool out of myself. I can't do that."

So later, here comes Henry again, and he's got a guitar and he says, "You gotta do it, you gotta do Elvis Presley."

Henry kept pestering me, so against my better judgment, I said, "well, okay, alright I'll do Elvis."

At Patriot's Hall at the high school, there was a dolly, six feet by 4 feet that was used to put folding chairs on it before the assemblies to set them up in the gym where the senior boys sat.

So, I got that dolly and set it up like a small stage.

And there I was going to mimic and dance to "Hound Dog." That was Elvis' big hit then.

Anyway, I had painted sideburns on and had kind of a duck's ass and a wig of long hair to look like Elvis. I wore white bucks and a little blue suit and a shirt and had my guitar.

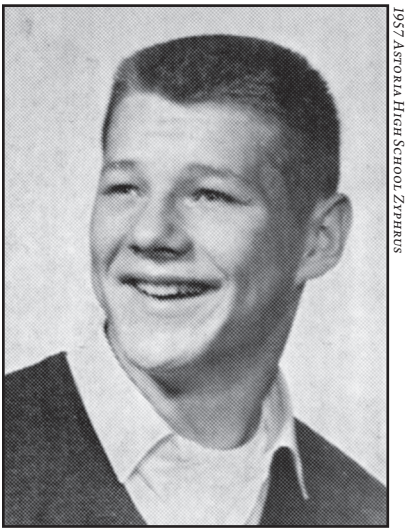
They introduced me and I was a nervous wreck because I knew it wouldn't fly, especially with the senior guys. So anyway, I came running out and I jumped up on that dolly and almost over jumped it. I put on the brakes and I got all settled down. The record started playing "Hound Dog" so I started in.

And I'm just busy doing the Hound Dog routine so as I'm doing it, I looked at the senior boys and they're going nuts! They're standing up there waving and clapping. I couldn't believe it. I'm pulling this

thing off. I couldn't believe it. Then halfway through the song, I jump off the stage and I go over to the freshman girls and they're just going crazy. You know I'm doing that guitar and stuff right in front of them. So that's how unbelievable it was. That's how Astoria High School's Elvis Presley came about.

We had all kinds of skits. We did all kinds of things. One skit I especially remember featured Bill Eastland in a wild jump. The gymnasium had an upper track that ran around the walls on the inside. It was all open in the middle so people could see the track above. There were ropes that hung from the ceilings where gym class students exercised by climbing the ropes in P.E. class. Bill was up on the track, had a hold of a rope and jumped down. He was wearing a sheet. I don't know if he was God or an angel, he came flying down and went clear to the other side, hitting it. He was okay. We got him down.

One time, they took that dolly and put a bathtub on it and so Gary was inside the bathtub with just a swimsuit on and Mike was pushing him around. It looked like they had water in the tub. Gary Manners had this bucket full of confetti. They ran around with that dolly and then come up to the kids, really close. And then Manners would get up, and he throw that bucket. And they all thought they were going to get a



1957 Astoria High School Zypharus

President, Ralph Norgaard

splash of water. But it was just confetti. But that was the fun we had.

Math classes are pretty dry, you know, pencil protectors and pressed shirts and nothing but business. But we all had a sense of humor and we had good times and we all got together and did all these things so we had our official club. And at the end of our senior year, we dissolved the club. We did that because it was ours and we did it. That was our idea and then we didn't want anybody to try to take off on it and maybe not do it right, and anyway we wouldn't be around.

So that was a Toucher Hole club we had. We just had so much fun and we never overdid it.

Mrs Wheeler was just a gem. She was really nice. At the end of our Senior year at AHS, at a school assembly, we had Mrs Wheeler

come out and gave her a tribute and thanked her for supporting our club.

Deep River

My dad emigrated from Norway when he was nineteen or twenty years old in 1929 and my mother was an American born Finn, born in Rosburg, Washington and was raised in Deep River.

My dad was fishing in Alaska in the summertime and Mom, my sister and my brother would go over to Deep River in the summertime. My other brother wasn't born yet. It was a great little community. On the right was a boarding house. On the left was Penti's Tavern. Penti had been a logger and had lost a leg. He had a wooden stump he walked on. Someone [?] had an old garage there in Deep River. They felt sorry for Penti so they cleaned it up and put a bar in there and gave it to him. That was Penti's Tavern. Then the loggers would kid and say, "Did you go to college?" The answer, "Yeah, we went to college. We went to Penti's College."

Appelo had the general store at Rosberg. The Chevron gas station was there and the post office across the street. There was a boarding house. Then across the street from Appelos' was Pearl's beauty parlor and the first aid station there and then you go farther east and go up a little hill. And they had a movie theater. The church was farther up. That was Deep River.

The trains would bring the logs down to Deep River, and they had a log dump there and they would raft them and take them down Deep River to the Columbia and then take them across to the lumber mills.

I spent a lot of summers in Deep River. The Deep River people didn't have a lot of land because there were mountainous hillsides closing them in. My grandmother had from twelve to eighteen cows. Before her husband died, he worked in the woods and they lived on that. They milked the cows and they took the cans down to the road and then the Lower Columbia Creamery would pick them up and take them down to Knappton and put them on the boat and take them across the Columbia River to the creamery in Astoria. So that's how they lived. They all had a few cows and then they worked in the woods, like *Deep River,* the book by Karl Marlantes who described the way of life very well. I could relate to it.

Just like in the book, the canneries controlled the price fishermen were paid for their fish and sometimes they could barely make a living, so they went on strike but the government crushed the strike. The fishermen decided to unite, pool their money together and build their own cannery in Uniontown with the workers as owners. It was the Union Fishermen's Cooperative Packing Company and was successful for many years.

"Gillnetters Best" was their label for salmon. In those days there was a great canned salmon market back east in New York. The Jewish people and others loved the Columbia River salmon. I worked at Union Fish cannery. We loaded boxcar after boxcar with them, sending them back east, so Union Fish did very well until they finally sold out. Union Fish cannery really made Uniontown prosper.

Sports

Our family moved to Astoria and I attended Astoria High School. I played football, basketball, and baseball, but had no real direction. All I knew is I wanted to go to college and play football in college. So I ended up at Oregon Technical Institute down in Klamath Falls and made the team. I gotta tell you a funny story about that.

I had a bad knee in high school and only got to play football for one year so I was still learning the game. When I got to college I had no real experience. At college, if they don't really want you on the team, they'll set you up on a "one on one" and you gotta hit the guy and hit the guy and the guy hit you and the guy hit you and they hope to do that to kind of just break your will and that you'll just take your gear and throw it in and leave. But I didn't know that. So there I am. I'm a freshman. And I've got this All-League guy, Frank Wilson. And so I had to come across the line and I had to stand there and he was practicing pulling the Guard coming down and I was standing there and he just leveled me. Oh wow, so I got up and the coach didn't even look at me or Frank. "You're not coming down fast enough!" he said.

"We gotta try it again." So here he comes again. Pow! Down, I go. Third time, Pow! Down, I go and I'm going, "I can't."

This is terrible. I've gotta try. But, there's going to be nothing left of me. So anyway, he comes at me.

And boy, I put my head down and went wide open after him and we hit helmet to helmet. I had an older helmet. The new ones were plastic or fiberglass made by Riddell. They weren't even cool helmets. I had this old kind of leather one and I hated it. So when we hit, my helmet broke in half, just two pieces came apart and fell on the ground. I remember the coaches. They were amazed. The Guard was still standing and so I picked up my helmet. I didn't really know what to do, and so the coach says, "Well, Norgaard, you better go get yourself a new helmet." Oh, was I happy because now I can get a good Riddell helmet. I can throw this piece of crap away. So, they figured that I would leave. You know, I went and got my brand new helmet and went back ready to go. Then they accepted me and I was on the team. I did very well. I started the two years I played. I was on offense and

tackle on defense. So, I had a good career. That was my saving grace right there. They were amazed that I came back. They had no idea that when I got the cool helmet, nobody could stop me.

I was taking structural design engineering at college and the only reason I took it is because I'd taken four years of math in high school and I had the basic training for mathematics engineering.

I was at college mainly to play football but after a year and a half at school sitting on my bed and I think. "I'm not going to leave here till I get a degree, and that's when I finally got kind of serious.

I knew when I went down to Klamath Falls, you had to go to class because if you don't go to class, they just take your clothes, throw you out in the street and tell you to go home. It wasn't like high school.

So anyway, I graduated. Now I had a two-year degree in Applied Sciences and I'm going to go get a job at engineering.

Engineering

In 1960, I went to Portland for an interview with an engineering outfit and they said, "Well, yeah, Ralph, this is nice but you know, we want someone with a bachelors' degree and some experience." Okay, so I got another interview and it's the same thing and I go to a third one. And it's the same song and dance. "Well, we need a bachelors' degree and some experience." I had my drawings. I had everything! I had a nice setup to show him what I did. And finally, I just I got upset and told the interviewer and said "How do you expect me to ever get a job when you won't hire me?"

This is ridiculous. I said thank you and goodbye and I walked out.

I'd been going to an employment agency up and a couple days later, someone from the employment agency called me and they had a job for a scale mechanic for truck scales, meatpacking plants, heavy duty scales, to install, check, make the scale weigh right, etc. I told the guy interviewing me that I didn't have any experience at that work. He told me "I want a person with no experience because I want to train him. So, hell," he said "you're hired." He was best at it. He was best in the northwest if not on the whole West Coast. He was really good and he trained me so I just got that job. I went home and heard the telephone ring and it's the engineering company. "Well, Ralph we decided, yeah, by golly, we'll give you a chance and will hire you. You can come in and start reading blueprints." And I said, "You know, I just got a job. Thank you, but no thank you." So I never made dime in the engineering business after I graduated from college. I spent five almost six years doing the scales. And then I came back and went fishing. Then Gary and I sold the

boat. I got married at thirty-six and always wanted to be a salesman for some odd reason. I find it easy to talk to strangers. I was going to be a shoe salesman.

But then I didn't do that. So anyway, Farmers insurance was looking for an agent here in town, another agent. And so I applied for that and I became an insurance agent. I went from a scale mechanic to deep sea fisherman and then to an insurance agent, a lot of different jobs and a lot of fun. I was lucky and enjoyed it all.

—Ralph Norgaard

For a trip down memory lane, you can browse the 1957 Astoria High School Zephyrus, as well as several other yearbooks, *at https://astoriamuseums.org/explore/research-collections/*

1957 Astoria High School Zyphrus

President Ralph "Elvis" Norgaard in full swing, performing for the student body.

The Torcher Hole Gang
The craziest club at AHS

Members

Andrus, Bill
Burback, Larry
Caspell. Bob
Eastland, Bill
Hall, Ed
Heesch, Lynn
Herbst, Bob
Howell, Mike
Jarvinen, Dave
Johnson, Dick
Kegg, Larry
Korpela, Keith
Lewis, Evelyn
Lopakka, Jim
Lowe, Priscilla
Manners, Gary
Mason, Fred
McNish, Dennis
Morfitt, Neil
Nelson, Wally
Norgaard, Ralph
Palmberg, Judy
Paulson, Jim
Richardson, Ron
Shannon, Dennis
Shepherd, Colleen
Simson, Stan
Sjoblom, Henry
Urell, Dave
Viuhkola, John
Wells, Tom
Whitman, Jim
Whitman, Roy
Winters, Sandy

The Warden
Mrs. Lyle Wheeler

Mrs. Robert Wheeler, advisor of the Torcher Club who had the unusual name of Lyle Mary Sullivan Wheeler was born on April 8, 1911 at Seattle, Washington to Porter Lyle Wheeler and Kathryn McDonald. Lyle Mary Sullivan grew up in Los Angeles. On the 1920 federal census, she was eight years old living with her father, mother and three year old sister, Margaret. Her father was working as an electrician for the city. He was born in Mason County, Tennessee and his wife in Kentucky. Ten years later, they were still living in Los Angeles. Her father worked as an electrician for a "tricolor film" corporation. Lyle Mary was eighteen and probably attending college. Her sister was thirteen. Then about 1935, she married Robert C. Wheeler who entered the U.S. military a little later. Their first child was born in California. In July 1940, Lyle Mary and her son joined her husband in Hawaii. Their second son was born that same year. In 1946, they moved to Astoria. According to the 1949 – 1950 city directory, she was teaching at Astoria High School and they were living at Alderbrook.

While playing baseball on July 14, 1949, Lyle Mary's younger

son, James Robert Wheeler, was accidentally hit in the head by a baseball bat. The injury was not considered serious at first, but it became worse. The next morning, the family frantically set out to get the boy to the hospital, but it was too late. On the way, he died. The nine-year-old boy was buried at Ocean View Cemetery in Warrenton. The Chaplain at the Tongue Point Naval Base officiated. The following boy Scouts were listed as serving as casket bearers: Richard Steinbock, Raymond Stansbury, Marvin Mark, Jr., Harold Husby, Ronald Smart and Robert Reese. Eleven years later, Mary Lyle's father, Porter Lyle Sullivan, died and was buried in Ocean View, not far from his grandson. He had spent his last years as a resident of Svensen.

By 1953, Mrs. Wheeler had completed her work for her Master's Degree at the Oregon State University School of Education. Her Master's thesis was titled "The Adjustment of High School Students in Astoria, Oregon." The paper is available to the public. A copy is located at the Heritage Museum. (The document does not name students.)

Mrs. Wheeler moved away from Astoria about the summer of 1958. The Torcher Club was ended by students of the club the preceding year when they graduated. The next chapter of her life was unknown until we received the following email from Marian Hauke Thom. She wrote that she had taken a math class from Mrs. Wheeler at AHS.

1957 Astoria High School Zephyrus

Lyle Mary Wheeler
UCLA, UC, OSC:
BA; Secondary Masters
Mathematics
Service Club

After AHS, we all went our separate directions. Phil and I were married in 1963 and returned to Seattle in 1965, after he graduated from law school. I was hired to teach Spanish at Edmonds High School, just north of Seattle. Imagine my surprise when I learned that one of my colleagues on staff was none other than Mrs. Wheeler! I had no idea that she had left Astoria, but I think I recall that she moved here because her son was in the area. Since we taught two different subjects, we didn't interact professionally, but it was my first experience teaching with someone who had taught ME, and I respected her so. I remember that she came to a baby shower for me in the spring of

1957 Astoria High School Zyphrus

Howdy, Ralph!

'66, as I was expecting our first child.

I only taught at Edmonds for one year, so don't know how much longer she was on staff there. We didn't keep in touch. Then, about 20 years ago, Phil's father had died and we placed his remains in a memorial garden at Evergreen Cemetery, in Seattle's north end. While wandering among the memorial markers, I saw one of LYLE MARY WHEELER…which certainly caught my eye because it's an unusual name. I don't remember the dates, and the area has filled in with so many memorials now that I'd have to search to find it. She was a remarkable woman, wasn't she? I have fond memories of her, as well as of Anna Marie Friedrich, Zoe Allen, Marjorie Halderman, and many others who touched our lives…

Fondly,

Marian Hauke Thom

Ancestry.com reports that Lyle Mary Sullivan Wheeler died February 18, 1987. Her last residence was at Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her husband, Robert Clifton Wheeler, died June 4, 1977 in King County, Washington.

1957 Astoria High School Zyphrus

Members of Torcher Hole rending "Banana Boat."

1957 Astoria High School Zytherus

The quiet, sweet, innocent, mathematicians in this bird-watching club [Torcher Hole Club] are, *first row:* Evelyn Lewis, Sandy Winters, Collen Shephard, Priscilla Lowe and "Warden" Wheeler. *Second row:* Mike Howell, Elvis Presley?, Bill Andrus, Ron Richardson, Fred Mason, Jim Paulson, Stan Simson, Dick Johnson, Bill Eastland, Wally Nelson, Tom Wells, Ed Hall, and Jim Whitman. *Third row:* Robert Herbst, Larry Burback, Dave Jarvinen, Henry Sjoblom, Barney Manners, Dave Urell, Keith Korpela, Jim Lopakka, Neil Morfitt, and John Viuhkola.

Custom Cars

by Stanley Simson

For a teenager of my generation, having your own car ranked second in importance only to certain members of the opposite sex. For boys, a car is more than a means of transportation. It is an extension of who you are. Leaving it looking "stock," as it came from the factory, would cause your car peers to question whether there's something not quite right with you. Part of making a car your own is choosing the make and model and customizing it in ways that make it appear unique and "Cool." The cost, in some cases, can exceed the purchase price of the car. Since Cool is in the eye of the beholder and since individual tastes play a part, it is unrealistic to view these customizing modifications to be cost recoverable when the car is eventually sold but then that never factored into the reason for doing it in the first place. Clubs were formed that brought together Custom Car enthusiasts. Members were identified by the club name on a small metal plaque mounted near the car bumper. In Astoria, in the late 1950s, you could go down to Commercial Street in the evening and watch your car peers cruise by, identified by the unique look of their vehicle. The "parade" participants included pranksters. There was a guy who, by using broomsticks, managed to operate his car from the

Of the many teachers I have encountered during my lifelong academic journeys, my high school math teacher, Lyle Wheeler, stands out. It was not due to her mastery of the subject matter, which was never in doubt, but because of her personal qualities and skills as a teacher.

Of subjects taught at the high school level mathematics, more than most others, requires a degree of focus and concentration that does not come naturally to teens more interested in having fun. Mrs. Wheeler understood that but nevertheless was hired to transfer her knowledge of this challenging subject to her students.

It was during my junior year that a group of her mostly male students decided to bring some fun into the math classroom. They informally declared the math classroom to be "The Torcher Hole" and declared themselves to be "The Torcher Hole Gang". They chose Ralph Norgaard as their leader (president) thereby giving this renegade group some unwarranted legitimacy to such an extent that it was among groups recognized in the yearbook.

back seat. To sidewalk spectators, the car appeared to be driverless.

I bought my first car, a 1949 Ford two-door sedan, from my older sister Joyce. She had been admitted to Nursing school, and students were not allowed to have a car. I was working after school and on Saturdays and had saved enough to pay her cash. The car was in very good condition and looked just as it came from the factory. (Note: Girls, including my sister, didn't generally acquire the customizing "disease" the way boys did.) I had a bad case of that disease held in check by my limited financial resources. I purchased a paint spraying gun and converted my parent's garage into a paint shop (Dad moved his car to the street.) I changed the color of my sister's former car from the "factory" pea soup green to a dark maroon. In addition, I installed dual exhausts with special mufflers that made a "purring" sound. During the time that I owned this car, it developed an oil leak in the differential that transfers power from the engine to the rear wheels. Without sufficient oil, the gears overheated and warped, causing a loud, high-pitched, whining sound that could be heard from a distance when the car was underway. Even though it made my car unique, it was not Cool. Finally, after multiple visits to a local wrecking yard to buy and install replacement gears, a friend offered to help by welding over the leak spot. Success at last! Sad to say, during my subsequent college years, I not only "totaled" (wrecked) this car but a replacement as well. Insurance providers avoided me.

An older fellow in town offered to sell his early 1930's Ford coupe that he had customized extensively.

Among the more aggressive Torcher Hole members (instigators) were Gary Manners, Mike Howell and Bob Herbst although many others were enthusiastic supporters. The girls in the class were above the shenanigans but lent their approval through smirks. Gary Manners and Mike Howell were frequent entertainers at school assemblies with their unrehearsed "bug dances". Elvis Presley was big at that time and the Liberty theatre had a life-sized cardboard image of him out front as a promotional item. It somehow became among the staging in the Torcher Hole.

While the Torcher Hole atmosphere was relaxed and jovial it never became unruly which I attribute to the fondness and respect we all had for Mrs. Wheeler. As such, she never had to exercise her authority to keep us in line and we were all the better for it.

Stan Simson
November 2020

He had clearly put a lot more money into the car than what he was asking for it. I not only liked the customization, which included a newer and more powerful engine, but the make and model were definitely Cool. I had enough in my savings account from after-school and summer jobs to pay the asking price. I knew that I'd better run it by my parents before spending a significant amount of money on what most observers would have described as a "Hot Rod." I figured Mother would be an easier sell since she was not into cars and possibly wouldn't appreciate the significance of what I was proposing. If she went along, I might avoid mentioning it to Dad. No luck. She told me that I better run it by Dad. Dad knew a lot about cars and immediately grasped what I had in mind. He listened carefully to my proposal, then told me that he didn't think it was a good idea. While I was EXTREMELY disappointed, I wasn't about to go against his advice. Now, in looking back, Dad did what parents are supposed to do. Look out for their young offspring's best interest when they have allowed their emotions to get in the way of a wiser decision.

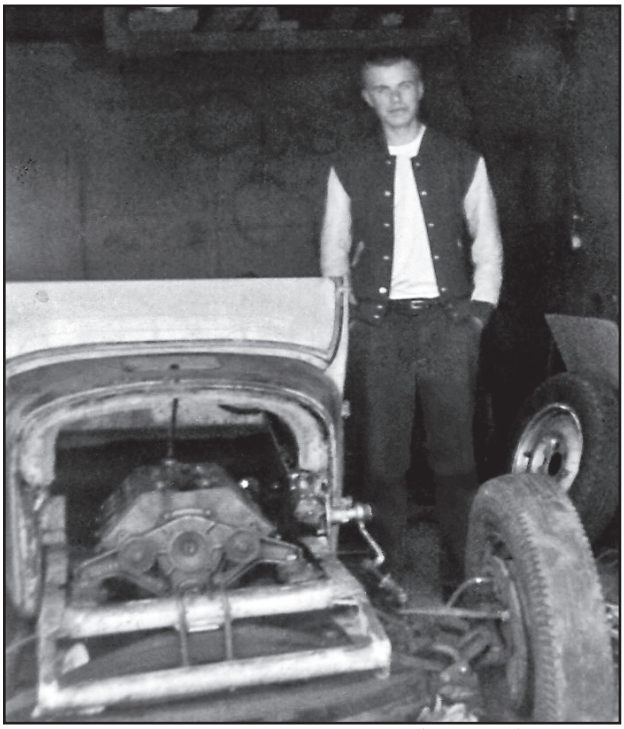


Image courtesy of Stan Simson

Stan Simson with his Model T "Hot Rod"

One of my friends was Don Carter. He was a year ahead of me in school and didn't yet own a car. However, he was afflicted, in a big way, with the "disease." He was friends with several of his classmates that suffered from the same. One day he mentioned that one of them, Dick Gilbertson, had a project underway to build a "Hot Rod" and had reached a point of burnout. Don suggested that we could take it over and work on it together. We towed Gilbertson's "project" to my parents' garage. The existing configuration included a chassis constructed by Dick, front and rear running gear with wheels and tires, and a 1926 Ford Model T body shell. One day we noticed an abandoned, barely visible, 1937 Ford that was engulfed in Blackberry vines.

We were able to salvage the engine and brake parts for use in our project. The engine had seized up after long-term disuse. After many days of effort, we were able to free it up and, after installing it in our vehicle, we were anxious to see if we could get it to run. However, we still lacked a gas tank. Late one night, in the early hours of the morning, as we coasted down 38th Street with Don perched next to the engine pouring gas from a drink cup down into the carburetor and with me steering and popping the clutch, we got it started. Even though we spent many extended evenings, adding to Gilbertson's effort, the vehicle still was not close to being "street legal." In order to experience the enjoyment of driving it, we towed it out into the country where Don's parents had some farmland with a road on it. When both Don and I left Astoria to attend college, we left our project behind and eventually lost track of it. A few years ago, as I was driving towards my home in California, a Hot Rod pulled up alongside. To my astonishment, it was a nearly identical configuration to the one that Don and I had labored over for so many evenings in my parent's garage. In my excitement, I followed it to its destination, which was a residence not far from my own. There, I shared my enthusiasm for his accomplishment with the owner, explaining why his vehicle had such a special significance for me. He was an older man who was clearly still afflicted with the "disease." It was a fortuitous and nostalgic encounter…. almost like unexpectedly happening upon an old friend.

After entering college, I no longer had the time or money to contribute to such projects, which, over time, helped to reduce the severity of my Custom Car disease. Even so, now, approximately sixty years later, I still enjoy an occasional visit to a Custom Car show, which resurrects fond memories from my teenage years in Astoria.

Memories for a Lifetime:
Old Deep River Logging Camp, ca. late 1950s

By Barbara Gonzalez

This story by Barbara Gonzalez was written for Dr. Julie Brown's writing class in January 2009.

The old wooden bridge had collapsed. Only the cables and one of the main trusses was still there, but that did not stop it from being a place to play. It didn't take long for one of the girls to go and tell the mothers what the boys were up to, and they came hurrying, just in time to see the boys running across that beam with their shoes untied and one little boy (Butchie) riding his bike on it. While most people think that children that grew up in logging camps had hard lives and were poor, these children's stories show us that this is not the case in every circumstance.

Mickey was born in the Old Deep River logging camp, and so was his older brother Butchie (Edward Martin). Their dad, Eddie Hurse, had his own business for part of the time that they lived there; he ran a Caterpillar. Mickey can remember going to work with his dad regularly. He recalls the experience of one time when he went that there was a hole on the plate of the deck and he got too close to it. His foot got sucked into the area between the driveshaft and the engine. There was so much pressure that it ripped his shoe right off, and they never found it. He stated, "I went home without a shoe, but it could have been my foot that was missing."

Mickey and Butchie lived right next to the train tracks, and Mickey loved to play in the ditch when it filled with water. You could find him there with his boats. He told me that all the dads in the camp realized that they needed to make a place for the children to play, so they cleared a spot and built a swing set, but it was only played on a couple of times. "It wasn't that there was anything wrong with it," Mickey said. The children just found other things to do. On Sundays, the train was parked up at the camp, where the children could play on it.

Mickey said that most families bought at least one brand new car during their time in the camp. His family had bought two new cars. They all had indoor plumbing, and his family had a TV. His dad wanted to watch TV so badly that he set up a cable system to receive some

Image courtesy of the Appelo Archives, Naselle, WA

Deep River Logging Co. locomotive crossing a trestle made of stacked logs.

channels. This helped to bring the first cable system into Naselle.

One winter, it snowed so bad that they were stuck up there for two weeks; even the train could not get through. Archie Olmstead was the first person that was finally able to get through to the camp. The boys liked to go over by the truck shop because the guys in the camp would have a huge snowball fight with them. According to Mickey, "The boys loved to go and throw snowballs, Butchie led the pack."

Butchie was several years older than Mickey, and he seemed to be a child who often found trouble. Mickey told me that Butchie enjoyed tormenting his mother. When his mom, Mary Hurse, would spank him, "He would just laugh, and she would then spank him again," Mickey stated. He eventually realized that if he ran around the corner of the house before laughing, his mom wouldn't get mad and spank him again even though she knew that he was still laughing.

Butchie almost burned the house down one time. He and Mickey were home alone because their parents had gone to town and they didn't want to go. The boys were sitting on the back porch, which was enclosed with some form of plastic that they used at that time. It was very close to the 4th of July, and Butchie was playing with some fireworks when the porch caught on fire. He grabbed the hose and put it out, but the screen door was ruined. He knew that if his parents saw it, he would be in big trouble, so he took the screen door off and hid

it. When Eddie and Mary got home, they noticed the door missing and asked what had happened to it. Mickey said that Butchie told them that "he thought that it was looking so bad that he decided to take it off so that it would look better." The only thing that his father said, according to Mickey, was, "That's a good idea." So, he got away with that stunt without them knowing, and Mickey never told them until years later.

Diane lived in a house just over from Mickey, and they played together regularly. Diane's dad, Eric Johnson, worked for Deep River logging as a blacksmith, and she can remember his boss, Fred Strom, giving money to the kids at Christmas. She remembers the pop machine that was in the office and how ice cold the drinks were when they came out-Orange Crush was her favorite. Her mom, Ila Johnson, worked as a flunky (waitress) in the cookhouse, and Diane was expected to finish the supper that would have been started when she got home. Diane got an allowance of twenty dollars a month to do this and to help with the housework.

They rode the school bus into Naselle to go to school. In one instance in the wintertime, she can remember the road by Larson's Hill was slick; the bus driver "had all the children get off the bus at the bottom of the hill except for Ralph Olmsted and Delbert Bergquist. They got to ride. Boy, were we ticked off at that."

When they first moved to the camp, Diane's parents told her and her sister that they would be getting a surprise and that it was on the moving truck. Diane was certain it was toys and told her new friends that they were getting new toys. "Imagine my surprise, shock, and disappointment when a new bedroom set was unloaded from the van, and we were told that was the surprise. I've laughed over that incident many times over the years." Evelyn, Diane's sister, went to school with some of the kids from the camp. They moved into the camp right before school started that year, and she "entered the second grade with Mickey, Bunny Engleson, and Joann Balza. It was nice to already know some classmates." Their dad, being the "blacksmith and welder in the camp, could fix or make just about anything for the woods." He "worked long hours when things broke down so that everything would be ready for the next day, even some Saturdays and Sundays."

She enjoyed playing with the Tonka trucks that Steve Hurse had and remembered that they played on the hillside between the house and the train tracks. They had fun sliding down the hill on pieces of cardboard. Her mom and Mary Hurse would take the kids almost anywhere, and Eddie Hurse used to take the kids to basketball games.

There was "always room for two more kids." A couple of times on the way home, they would find a slide on the road, and the car could not get through, so they "would have to walk in the dark to Schlick's or Appelo's and they would take us home."

Playing in the pond was another fun thing to do, and one winter when she was sick, Diane helped Evelyn climb out of the window so that she could skate on the ice. All the kids were playing there, and she fell through the ice. When Diane went home to change her clothes, they got caught. "We both were in trouble, but I got over my cold and cough in a hurry. We still laugh about that one."

Evelyn remembers hearing a story about Bunny Engleson that happened before they moved there. Bunny was about five or six, and after the train had finished its morning run, she climbed onto the train and it took off with her. The men saw the train moving and ran after it. I "don't know what kind of trouble she got into." Bunny's brother used to repeat the bad language that he heard from the loggers, and he never got into trouble for saying them, but Bunny did. So, Bunny and Evelyn would "go out somewhere, sit by a tree, and say all the bad words we could think of. The trees didn't seem to mind."

During the time that they lived there, several houses burned down, and there was a fire in the woods close to the camp. Wayne Jacob's house was one that burned down. Mickey said that "his family went to the movies in Ilwaco, to see *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and when they got back to the camp, they found that the oil stove in their house had exploded."

Shirley Olmstead thinks fondly of the memories of growing up in the camp. She can remember playing in the woods and in the river. The kids used to walk across a log to get to the other side of the river, knowing that they would get in trouble if their parents found out. Playing on the train tracks was always great fun, and putting pennies on them was a favorite thing to do. She loved to pick huckleberries and knew the best places to go to find them.

Shirley also remembers riding the school bus and told me that there was one time when just after Steve Bergquist had gotten on, they had to wait for the train to go by at the bottom of Larson's Hill. Just as the last car of logs was going by, it lost its load, and the logs rolled off. Shirley said, "Luckily, the logs rolled across the road and down the bank of the road. Needless to say, we had a lot to talk about that day at school."

The kids used to go to the cookhouse and get treats because Diane's mom and some of the other moms worked there. They all felt very safe in the camp, and nobody locked

their doors. The kids never bullied one another, but, like all kids, they did pick on one another a little bit.

Jim was born while his parents lived in the camp. They moved for a short time to Ilwaco and then came back. When they first came back, there was no house for them to move into, so they stayed in the bunkhouses with the guys. Jim remembers that he stayed in one house while his parents, George and Despina Natseos, and his sister Corrine lived in another. Both of his parents worked in the camp, and he remembers that it was "like being a latch-key kid for him and his sister."

During the summer, the girls ran all over the place, and played ball with the guys. There was only one rule: since the camp closed its gate at nine, they had to be out of it. He can remember on Sundays watching the firemen start up the train so that it would be ready to go on Monday. Watching TV at the Hurse house was popular; "Mary and Eddie were always kind to the kids."

Jim played with Butchie, and "they always had to drag Mickey around with them." He remembers that they would take Mickey to the top of a hill with a bike and push him down it. "If Mickey did it just right, he would crash and burn into the blackberry bushes." When I asked Mickey about this, he stated, "He is not telling the story right; I didn't know how to ride the bike."

While they had a lot of fun in the camp, some sad things happened they had to deal with. They had friends move out of the camp. And they even had to deal with the death of one of their friends. Butchie Hurse died while they were still living in the camp, and some of the boys saw this accident happen.

The children grew up close, and they still keep in touch with one another. They used to have a reunion every couple of years, but now some of them are gone. Even though their lives led them down different paths, they have a bond from the past that will always be there.

Sources:

Carlton E. Appelo, *A pioneer scrapbook of the Columbia River North-Shore communities: Wahkiakum and Pacific Counties, Washington, 1900-1985* (Deep River, WA.: C. E. Appelo, c1986)

Shirley Bigness, e-mail message to author, January 22, 2009

Diane Gustafson, e-mail message to author, January, 2009

Michael Hurse, In discussion with author, January 2009

Megan Moholt, Weyerhauser history archive, January 26, 2009

Evelyn Naimo, e-mail message to author, January 24, 2009

Jim Natseos, In discussion with author, January 20, 2009

CCHS IMAGE #837.151

These Svensen area boys knew how to have fun.
Glass plate negative by Elmer Coe, ca. 1900.

Courtesy of Stan Simson

Another Elvis Sighting…September, 2007 at the Liberty Theater in Astoria. Ralph Norgaard as "Elvis" with Dave Urell providing transportation.